

Strictly Third Division

AFC BOURNEMOUTH is a title which reflects the club's progressive outlook — they adopted the 'Association Football Club' prefix officially last season, to save any confusion with the Bournemouth amateur club, who play in the Hampshire League. But the fact remains that the Cherries, as they are nicknamed, are strictly Third Division.

Since the club first gained Football League status in 1923-24 season they have remained at the same level, except for one recent season. And they went down to Division Four, only to gain promotion the following season.

Bournemouth are the side who have often got so close to promotion, only to fail in the closing stages of the season. In 1971-72 they seemed certain to qualify for the Second Division but they were pipped at the post by Brighton for runners-up position.

So the Cherries, despite reaching a club record total of 62 points, missed out again, and finished third in the table.

For the last two seasons Bournemouth have been among the pacesetters in the division, fading out in the final weeks of the season to finish seventh and 11th respectively.

Last season the club was torn apart when manager John Bond left to take over at Norwich City, taking club coach Ken

back with the Cherries, took over as coach after a knee injury had forced his retirement as a player. Like Hartley, his brother-in-law, Howe is a West Ham product.

Under the new regime, the policy has been drastically changed. The big-spending days are over and a fortnight ago the

Freddie Cox, the former Arsenal and Spurs winger, also had his first chance as manager at Dean Court. It was under his guidance that Bournemouth had their most glorious spell in the F.A. Cup. In 1956-57 they went through to the sixth round, before losing at home to Manchester United, 2-1. In

season. He quickly emphasised the change in outlook by signing four players at a total cost of £24,000 — which was nothing compared to the huge fees which had become commonplace in Bournemouth dealings.

Plymouth pair Neil Hague and Derek Rickard were obtain-

But manager Hartley again made changes, bringing back three experienced players whose first-team future with the club had been, to say the least, clouded.

John O'Rourke, Brian Greenhalgh and Alan Welsh, who had been signed midway through last season at a combined cost of £115,000, were all recalled. It was a remarkable comeback in each case, but O'Rourke's recall was the most dramatic. Only a month before he had been "sacked" by the club for alleged serious misconduct. He was reinstated after a successful appeal to the Football League and after talks with manager Hartley, the player returned to the first team squad — and the league side.

Greenhalgh, who earlier this season was on loan to Torquay and then turned down a move to Watford, was also restored. So was Welsh, after being taken off the transfer list. This trio helped Bournemouth pull out of the slump which started with the 5-2 defeat at Preston.

Inconsistency, and an inability to make the most of their scoring chances, have been the main problems. Defensively, they have been strong and well organised.

A look at Bournemouth's history

Brown and three key players with him.

The club finished the season with Trevor Hartley in charge of the side, as club coach and part of a four-man "syndicate" running the club.

YOUNGEST BOSS

But in the close season, millionaire chairman Harold Walker, whose idea it was to experiment with a "co-operative" scheme, decided to revert to more orthodox administration. Hartley, former Bournemouth player who was signed from West Ham, was made manager. And at 27 he became the youngest boss in the business. Bobby Howe, former full-

chairman announced that the club's future was in jeopardy with the losses currently running at £2,000 a week.

Several times in their long Third Division career the club have come close to promotion. But a higher status remains tantalisingly out of reach — although a £500,000 new grandstand is half-way completed.

Bournemouth have given several soccermen their first opportunity of managership — including John Bond, who was appointed in 1970 and took the club to runners-up spot in Division Four. Bill McGarry, now with Wolves, started out on his new career as player-manager of Bournemouth.

previous rounds they won away to Wolves and then scored a remarkable 3-1 home win against Spurs.

Most memorable cup-tie of recent years was in 1967-68 when Bournemouth went to Liverpool in a third round replay and appeared in front of a 54,000 crowd. But they have had their shocks as well, the most recent being a home defeat by Southern League side Yeovil four years ago.

DIFFICULT START

Trevor Hartley was left with the difficult task of almost completely reorganising the personnel — and the policy this

ed for a joint fee of £15,000, striker John Wingate was signed from Exeter, and goalkeeper Kevin Charlton from Wolves. Then Hartley acquired midfielder man Trevor Howard, valued at £50,000 from Norwich City.

Since then the only addition to the strength has been centre-half Neil Merrick, signed for £3,500 from Bromsgrove as understudy to John Delaney.

After a highly promising start to the season, Bournemouth hit a bad patch, and this left them too close for comfort to the relegation zone. They had a spell of 10 league matches which produced only one victory, the 4-0 thrashing of Crystal Palace, at Bournemouth.